

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and notes on Newfoundland and Labrador's Intangible Cultural Heritage Program

October/November 2013
ISSN 1918-7408

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Heritage Foundation of NL



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Stories and snacks for cool fall nights

Every community has stories that get passed around. Whether it's the derelict house thought to be haunted, or the bog that children are told to avoid because of fairies, tales of the supernatural are a long-standing tradition in Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Herb Badcock, a former resident of Bay Roberts who was born and raised there during the 1920s and 30s explains that before there was electricity in town, people relied on light from their oil lamps. It wasn't uncommon for the lamps to draw family and friends together in the house, perhaps also sitting by the fire on a cold night. One of the best ways to entertain each other in these times was to tell legends and ghostly tales from the past, particularly to the younger generation. Such stories included ghost stories, tales of pirates and buried treasure, fairy stories, and tales of signs and miracles.

We've been hearing a lot of stories over the past few months, and will be continuing to collect them. In this issue, we present on just some of those stories. In this issue, we draw to the end of our wells project, and share some thoughts and findings on wells, water, and community. We have news from Norris Arm, with stories about traditional games, and from the Bay Roberts area on a project to document traditional folk belief, including stories collected from students at Ascension Collegiate. And to finish off, we have more stories brought to life through the digitization of the Baccalieu Trail Heritage Corporation oral history files.

And if all those stories get you hungry, don't kvetch! Memorial University students in the Department of Folklore are partnering with us to organize a rugelach making workshop. You can join in, and learn how to make these traditional Jewish treats yourself! See inside for more details.

(Photo: the grave of Jacob Allen Snow, Bay Roberts, killed in Boston in 1918. If you know his story, please share it with us.)

All's Well That Ends Well

By Sarah Ingram

Over the past four months I have been lucky enough to travel all around Eastern Newfoundland meeting new people and documenting their water sources, stories and traditions. It has been an incredible experience and I have learned a lot, both about well construction and cleaning, the sanctity of springs and water, and its importance in both family and community.

Now that things are winding down on the wells and springs project and I have time to look at everything and analyze a bit, I have seen a few very obvious themes to the different types of traditions that surround this vital resource: home, community, and spirituality.

As my last full month here and subsequently my last newsletter article, I thought it would be nice to reflect on what I've learned, how it presents itself, and what their importance is, by breaking it down and seeing how different aspects of life and home are affected by folklore.

At its most basic, water is essential to life, and so traditions that surround having a reliable source of clean, uncontaminated drinking water had the most folklore and traditions around them. These ranged from which were the best sources of water, to how different colors of water tasted, who was responsible for collecting water, and all the different ways to keep it clean.

Almost universally across all my interviews and chats I heard that spring and well water was preferable to city tap water, due to the clear taste and the super cold temperatures, even in the hot summertime.

Many people recalled being sent to get buckets of water from the well or spring, either taking turns between siblings or being forced to do it because they were the youngest or the strongest.

Cleaning wells has changed from the use of lime to Javex over the years, and I have heard from almost every well owner, spring informant and interviewed friend that they either used to have a trout in their well, or knew of someone who did. The folklore surrounding trout in wells is not exclusive to Newfoundland - stories of trout, fish and even eels being put down inside wells in order to eat sediment and parasites that were in the water are found all over.

From a community standpoint, the folklore surrounding wells and springs focuses on finding water, protecting it, and what to do when something terrible happens. A water dowser would be passed around by word of mouth in the community, and when someone needed to dig a well they would be there to assist them in finding the perfect spot to do so.

I also heard a lot about the sanctity of water and wells and how important it was to protect them: people who lived close to wells would shoo children away if they were fiddling with a community spring; when a well went dry you could count on your neighbor to allow you to draw from theirs; and if a child was tragically hurt or lost around a well, the community made sure to seal and close it and prevent any future accidents from happening. The protection of this important resource was something that fell to the community, not just individuals, and they all seemed to have everyone's best interest at heart, and rallied around each other when issues arose.



Some of the most well known folklore stories in Newfoundland regarding water sources have spiritual connotations to them, the most popular one being that of Father Duffy's Well on Salmonier Line. There are quite a few different interpretations of this spring, and the origin story ranges from the mundane to the supernatural.



The most basic of stories is that Father Duffy traveled along the to and from St. John's, and frequently stopped to drink at this spring on his way to several court dates he needed to attend to. On the other end of the folklore spectrum is that the well originated from a fight between Father Duffy himself and an evil spirit - when he struck the spirit to the ground and defeated him, water sprung from that spot. This would have been between 1833-1880, the time from when Father Duffy arrived in Newfoundland to when he passed away.

Since then, this spot has become associated with him specifically, and eventually became a dedicated and visited place to remember him and his achievements.

Spirituality doesn't necessarily need to be religious, either. Many people told me that loved ones while sick or on their death beds would request a drink of water from a specific well or spring that held significant meaning to them. One story I heard was that the family didn't want to make the trek to the spring, so brought water from a different source, but the requester knew the difference, and sent them back for the real deal. So many people have a strong spiritual connection to these memories, and they often are associated with water.

Having water has always been incredibly important to survival, and because of that there are so many different folkloric traditions and incredible stories surrounding them. We would still love to hear about your wells and springs, and the stories and folklore that surround them! Continue to share them at ich@heritagefoundation.ca, or call 739-1892.

And I can certainly say, all's well that ends well :)

Rugelach on the Rock

On Sun. November 24th, Memorial University's Public Folklore class will host "Rugelach on the Rock," a pastry baking workshop at St. Thomas' Church Hall. This instructional workshop led by Jonathan Richler will teach participants how to make rugelach (roo-guh-lakh), a traditional Jewish pastry packed with sweet or savory filling. Participants will learn to roll, prepare, shape and bake this crescent-shaped treat with a Newfoundland twist. The workshop is organized by Folklore 6740: Public Folklore, a graduate student course at MUN on local traditions, in partnership with the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador. Jonathan Richler, a St. John's native, is president of the local Jewish Community Havura and an organizer of the J-Deli pop up deli at Chinchéd Bistro.

The event will take place from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm on Sunday, November 24th at St. Thomas' Church Hall, 8 Military Road, St. John's. Registration is \$20 and includes all materials and detailed instruction. Space is limited. To register, contact Nicole Penney at the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador at 1-888-739-1892 ex. 6 or nicole@heritagefoundation.ca

FOLKLORE 6740: PUBLIC FOLKLORE PRESENTS

RUGELACH

ON THE ROCK

RUGELACH - A TRADITIONAL JEWISH PASTRY
These tiny crescent-shaped delights are made from sour cream or cream cheese dough, and filled with anything from cinnamon to chocolate to fruit preserves.

JOIN US SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2013
to make your own batch of rugelach! \$20 includes all materials, and detailed instruction by Jonathan Richler. Space is limited!

To register contact Nicole Penney at 1-888-739-1892 or nicole@heritagefoundation.ca.

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

“Where your stick pitched, that was the score” Remembering Childhood Games

By Joelle Carey

When running any sort of society or foundation, things can get backlogged. This is especially true when your collected data comes in the form of audio interviews. So many recordings, so little time. However, when you finally get the chance to see what your collection has been missing out on, it's a real treasure.

Take, for instance, my recent project at HFNL. I'm working on taped interviews from Norris Arm which were conducted between the late 1980s and early 2000s. The interviews hold the memories and voices of Norris Arm residents, some of whom are no longer with us, and through our digital archive, we will finally get to share their words.

The first step to getting these interviews online is finding out what they contain. This is currently my undertaking. By listening to every audio recording I get to connect with the people of Norris Arm and learn about how the town has changed and how the people of Norris Arm view their community. Most of the interviews contain the same questions but the answers are always unique.

For instance, take the Norris Arm Heritage Museum's interview with Baxter Langdon. At the time of recording, in January 1999, he had lived in Norris Arm for 86 years - a lifetime resident. This interview provides a great perspective of the way things have shifted over the years in Norris Arm. For instance, he speaks of the winters when he was much younger, saying that they were much greater than winters of today. He states: "Every home had a fence around it, five or six feet high, you know. In winters, you wouldn't see a fence at all. We'd ride over that on an old sled we had made up." He shares similar stories about old and new ways of transportation and differences in schooling.

While his recollections of this type are certainly engaging, what fascinated me the most about this interview was his description about what he, and other children, in the community would do to entertain themselves in the warmer months. He delightfully shares on this recording a description of a game he simply calls "piddly."

NA: Can you remember when you were small and out beating around with your friends, what kinds of things would you do?

BL: Well, there wasn't a big lot to do, I mean, you'd make your own, whatever, game. One game we use to play, I don't know if you've ever heard, called piddly. You put two rocks here and you put a stick across it. You have another stick and you'd hook it and the fellow who was there, he caught it, and you were out. And if he didn't catch it, you took your stick and measured where your stick pitched and that's, that was the score.

This interesting little description is of a game that was played in many parts of Newfoundland, though it was known by many different names such as Tiddly-Wink, Tiddly, and Scat among others. According to informants interviewed by Keith Ralph Coles, "...this game was both good and 'treacherous'--good because if you only had a short while for playing you could play it around the house, but treacherous because sometimes a player on the opposing team might get the tiddly stick in the face" (1998, 110).

While it sure sounds simple, this activity was a sure way to beat boredom during summer afternoons when all the chores were done. Now that our summer is coming to a final rest here in Newfoundland and Labrador, I wonder if there are any more childhood games that you can recall from days gone past?

*Special thanks to Suzanne Power, Sandra Clarke, and Philip Hiscock for helping with transcription.

Coles, Keith Ralph. 1998. "Children's Games and Social Change in Savage Cove, Newfoundland (1900-1992). MA Thesis: Department of Folklore, Memorial University of St. John's.

Tell Us a Spooky Story

By Lisa Wilson

In early October, the HFNL had the opportunity visit Kim Welsh's Level 1 English class at Ascension High School in Bay Roberts. We wanted to find out if young people still hear legends and tales from members of their families. According to the students, it seems the tradition of passing down tales continues to live on.

Below are two of the many interesting local stories that we collected from them. The first is a ghost story told by Jesse Rideout about two fishermen who lend each other a helping hand, even though one of them is no longer living. The second one, by Brandon Cross, is about how his great grandmother solved the difficult problem of when the fairies came and tried to abduct her baby.

"This story took place in Upper Island Cove. Once there were two fishermen. They were very good friends and one winter, one of the fishermen found himself without any food and he was sure to starve. Before spring came around, his buddy shared half of his only barrel of flour, which kept him from dying. The following spring, the man who received the flour had been fishing and had struck a jagged rock off the coast of Island Cove and drowned in the sinking of the ship. About a week after, his friend who gave his friend the flour was fishing in the same area his friend died at. The fog rolled in over his boat and he could see very little and didn't know where he was going. Suddenly a large light flashed in the water near the rocks where his friend drowned. A ghostly figure of his friend appeared and said to him, "The rocks, the rocks," in a very ghostly voice. The fisherman always said that his friend repaid him for the flour by saving his life."

-Jesse Rideout

"When Nan was really young, she was only about 6 months old, back then they would take you and if it was nice out, they would wrap you up or just take you and lay you outside for some fresh air. Nan was outside for about two hours and when Nan's mom came to check on her, her face was really grey and she looked really old. So my Nan's mom was really creeped out. Apparently, back then, if the fairies took you, you were able to take them with a shovel or just take them and throw them. If you were thrown, the fairies would let you go. So anyways, my Nan's mother took her and tossed her in a snowbank and when Nan's mom came back and picked her up she was back to normal."

-Brandon Cross

Please send us your tales of the supernatural from Bay Roberts and surrounding communities. From ghosts, fairies, premonitions and superstitions to weather lights and tokens, we'd love to hear from you.

Please write to: lisa@heritagefoundation.ca



More Tales of the Baccalieu Trail

By Nicole Penney

In 2005 a collection of filmed oral histories from over 40 elders were collected by the Baccalieu Trail Heritage Corporation. This project recorded memories of living and working in the area, going to school, children's games, home remedies, the first modes of transportation in the area and tales of the supernatural. Robert (Bob) Andrews is a resident of Ship Cove and was interviewed as part of this project. Andrews was born and raised in Port de Grave and was a boatbuilder and a former fisherman and steel worker.

In an interview with Linda Reid, Andrews shares several stories, two of which are transcribed below. The first is a tall tale about a young couple whose lives were saved by a hoop dress and the other is a story about a young boy who was fairy-led while picking berries with his family.



Lover's Leap in Blow Me Down

We got a little place down there, I'll tell ya. There's a cliff down there and it's called Lover's Leap. It's 80 feet from the sea level up to the top to where the road goes along the cliff. And t'was a fellow and a girl who used to go together, back in the 1800s. And they used to - the rails along by the top of the cliff, they used to rest up against that in the nighttime. So the father of the girl didn't want her to be going with this guy so one night he took his saw and he went down and he sawed off half the rail, sawed the rail partly off. And when they rested up against the rail in the night they fell out. And they fell 80 feet. At that time the girls used to wear the big dresses with a hoop. The two of them fell down together, when they landed down on the beach they wasn't hurt and they got out of it. And they say that the wind, during the fall, got up in and under this hoop dress and slowed down the fall so that they didn't get hurt when they pitched. And they call that Lover's Leap.

Taken by the Fairies in Ship Cove

In about nineteen hundred and twenty-eight, I think, there was a family that lived down the road here just a short ways, and they used to go berry picking in the fall of the year, after fishing. They'd take the boat and a lot of the people from here used to go over on the other side of the harbour picking berries - blueberries, partridgeberries and blackberries and different kinds of berries. And this family went over and they had one young boy. He was only about 6 years old. And they watched, and all the ground filled up with big red berries. This little boy started to cry and he just went on out through the bushes and went on probably 200-300 feet and they lost sight of him. After a couple of hours they found that boy and brought him back and got on the boat and he was crying. And they said that the fairies took him. All the berries and that disappeared on the ground. And when they got him back on the boat and they put him on the deck boards, he came alright. But that man didn't speak anymore more for 70 odd years. And they claim the fairies took him. He never did speak again, as a matter of fact, I knew the man.

The oral history with Bob Andrews, along with the other Baccalieu Trail interviews, will soon be up on Memorial University's Digital Archives Initiative, as part of our ICH inventory. Stay tuned!

